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LIZ SMITH



King's Death Revisited

DO YOU believe that Lyndon Johnson was part of the plot to kill your father?" asks Forrest Sawyer of Dexter King tonight on ABC's "Turning Point."

Dexter replies: "I do . . . based on the evidence that I've been shown . . . I would think that it would be very difficult for something of that magnitude to occur on his watch and he not be privy to it."

Tonight's hourlong "Turning Point" segment concerns the assassination of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, and the belief, now shared by members of King's family, that James Earl Ray is *not* the assassin. Another of King's sons, Martin Luther King III, insists: "James Earl Ray had almost no part . . . basically nothing to do with this assassination." Sawyer's piece, which includes interviews with Andrew Young, William Pepper (James Earl Ray's lawyer), David Garrow and others, is one of the most compelling, and sure to be controversial, investigative profiles ever done for TV.

Coretta Scott King, summoning up all her famed dignity and sincerity, tells Forrest, "What we are doing we believe in. I don't think we are naive. I think we believe that this is a cause, and is part of a cause, that we have to fight for."

"Who Shot Martin Luther King" is a blockbuster, perhaps history in the making — or should we say, history in the remaking. For myself, an advance look at Forrest Sawyer's finely crafted presentation made me feel that in the end, Ray's lawyer *did not* build a convincing case for the convicted assassin's innocence. (Everybody loves a conspiracy!) But you be the judge. Fascinating stuff. Don't miss it.



AP Photo, 1994

Dexter King
The plot thickens

TOO BAD the monkeys in the jungles of Costa Rica can't talk. The animal kingdom got quite an eyeful recently when Harry Hamlin and his wife, Lisa Rinna of "Melrose Place," vacationed on the Osa Peninsula. Rinna tells Soap Opera Weekly, "We had lots and lots of sex but in a beautiful jungle setting, so it made it that much better!"

This might be more than some of you ever wanted to know about Harry and Lisa. But these days, celebs need to "share."

CAMERON DIAZ and Pierce Brosnan are closer than this to inking a deal for a costarring remake of 1968's super-stylish caper film, "The Thomas Crown Affair." The original starred Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway.

Miss Diaz will be hotter than hot when "My Best Friend's Wedding" soon opens. In this romantic comedy she manages to hold her own, gloriously, against a fabulous, full-wattage Ju-

lia Roberts. (This is the Julia fans have been waiting for — with an intriguing twist.)

In the good old / bad old days of moviedom, no star of Julia's magnitude would have allowed a costar to glow as Cameron does. (Joan Crawford, famously competitive, would have taken one look and nixed Diaz on the spot.) But Roberts handpicked her cast, and when it was suggested, early on, that Diaz might be *too* appealing, Roberts replied, "But she has to be. How else can we have any conflict if my rival is a bore, or not-so-attractive?"

Then the actress smiled slyly and said, "Don't worry about me. I can handle myself. I know what I'm doing." I'll say!

FOX TV execs are high on 20-year-old Aussie actor Heath Ledger, of the coming summer series, "Roar." This fantasy, which takes place in Ireland, circa 400 A.D., is getting excellent advance buzz. (Ron Kosslow of "Beauty and the Beast" and "American Gothic's" Shaun Cassidy are the creative minds behind the show.)

"Roar" debuts Monday, July 14, and 1997 may well turn out to be the Summer of Heath.

TOMORROW MORNING, Rosie

O'Donnell marks the national Day of Compassion, raising awareness of the continuing AIDS epidemic. Rosie welcomes guests who are on the frontlines of the battle: Liza Minnelli, k.d. lang (both of whom perform), "Melrose Place" actor Jack Wagner, Broadway treasure Julie Harris and HIV positive triathlete Jim Howley.

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DON'T DIS Madonna! That's what readers of Out magazine say. Reacting to Fran Lebowitz's scathing "tribute" to M in the recent "Icons We Love" issue, La Ciccone's fans think the famously witty and acerbic Lebowitz is way off base. From one letterwriter: "Yes, Madonna has marketed herself, and why not? Had Fran done the same, I would still be interested in her opinions." Another questions, "What does Fran *do* anyway?" And still another offers Fran this advice: "Get some therapy, work through your frustrations and learn to be nice."

A "nice" Fran Lebowitz? We shudder at the thought!

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TOMORROW ON Fox's "Good Day New York," Lynne White has gathered a clutch (or should I say a snarl) of New York's top hairdressers for a dish fest. Around 8:20 a.m., you can see Vincent Roppatte, John Barret, Mark Garrison, Carmine Minardi, Harry King and Rudy Tounsel tell "all" about their famous clients. Who dyes, who doesn't? Who tips, who doesn't? You know, the good stuff.